



(Full-size, clear copy of application
as originally filed)

08/783,372

Sub Spec. (NE)

#10
1/25/99

Patent Claims

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D.S.
1. Method of building up a data bank (3) containing customer data and/or for the organisation of a rebate or coupon system in which products (21) to be sold to customers (14) or records handed out to customers (14) on the purchase of products (21) or services are in each case provided with an individual code (22, 25) and the code (22, 25) is transmitted by the customer (14) after the purchase of the product (21) or the service, together with data characterising the respective customer (14), to a data collecting station (1) via a communication network, in particular via Internet or a telephone network, with the data collecting station being laid out to at least store the data characterising the respective customer (14).
 2. Method in accordance with claim 1, characterised in that the code (22, 25) is stored before the acquisition of the product (21) or of the service, without the participation of the customer (14), in a reference memory (4) associated with the data collecting station (1); in that, after the transmission of the code (22, 25) by the customer (14) to the data collecting station (1), a comparison takes place of this code (22, 25) transmitted by the customer (14) with the code (22, 25) previously deposited in the reference memory (4); and in that the data collecting station (1) only takes account of those transmitted codes (22, 25) which were previously deposited in the reference memory (4).

3. Method in accordance with claim 2, characterised in that additional information relating to the product (21) or the service is stored in the data collecting station (1), preferably in the reference memory (4), with this information being respectively associated with the associated code (22, 25) and, for example, relating to the nature of the product (21) or of the service, to the place of manufacture (7) or the point of sale (11), to the time of manufacture or the time of sale and/or to the price of the product (21) or of the service.
4. Method in accordance with claim 3, characterised in that the additional information is stored before the acquisition of the product (21) or of the service, without the participation of the customer (14), in the data collecting station (1), in particular together with the associated code (22, 25) in the reference memory (4) of the data collecting station (1).
5. Method in accordance with claim 3, characterised in that the additional information is contained in the code (22, 25).
6. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that a code (22, 25) transmitted a plurality of times by one or more customers (14) to the data collecting station (1) is taken into account by the data collecting station (1) only on the first transmission.
7. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the codes (22, 25) which can be transmitted within a specific time interval can be

distinguished from one another with at least a specific probability.

8. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that all the codes (22, 25) to be transmitted within a specific time interval are distinguishable from one another.
9. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that at least one element of the code (22, 25) consists of a random number.
10. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that at least an element of the code (22, 25) consists of a pseudo random number with it being ensured that all the random numbers generated within a specific time interval are distinguishable from one another.
11. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the code (22, 25) consists of a sequence of numbers and/or a sequence of letters/numbers and/or of a bar code and/or of magnetically, optically or electronically stored data.
12. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the code (22, 25) is designed to be machine-readable.
13. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the records (23) having the code (25) are formed as invoices printed out by a computerised till computer (11), as telephone bills, as entry cards or the like.

14. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that at least a part of the code (22, 25) is formed by a commercially customary bar code price label.
15. Method in accordance with one of the claims 1 to 12, characterised in that the code (22) is arranged at a position (20a) of a product package (21) or of a product label which is not visible and/or not accessible from the outside, and is in particular printed thereon, punched therein or adhered thereon.
16. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that customer-specific data, such as for example the name, the postal address, the telephone number, the age, the sex and/or the profession of the customer is stored in the data collecting station (1).
17. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the network address, in particular the Internet address of the customer (14) is stored in the data collecting station (1).
18. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the time of the code transmission to the data collecting station (1) is stored in the data collecting station (1).
19. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that, when a customer (14) first makes contact with the data collecting station (1), customer-specific data, in particular the name, postal

address and/or network address are stored and a characteristic number or code is allotted to the customer (14).

20. Method in accordance with claim 19, characterised in that the data collecting station (1) identifies the customer (14) on further contacts which take place after the first contact has been made with reference to the characteristic number or to the characteristic code.
21. Method in accordance with one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the data transmission from the customer (14) to the data collecting station (1) is initiated, at least from the second time contact is made onwards, by telephone keyboard inputs made by the customer (14), with the data to be transferred, preferably the code to be transferred, consisting of numbers, in particular exclusively of numbers.
22. Use of a data bank built up in accordance with one of the claims 1 to 21, characterised in that a customer (14), after having acquired a specific number of products (21), or services, or products or services which correspond to a specific value, receives a reward, preferably via the communication network, and in particular a reward transmitted via the Internet.
23. Use in accordance with claim 22, characterised in that the reward takes place by the crediting of a specific amount of money, (e-cash), by the granting of specific Internet shopping rights, or by the granting of rights of use which can be used via Internet.

24. Use of a data bank built up in accordance with one of the claims 1 to 21, characterised in that, in dependence on specific data stored with respect to a customer (14) in the data collecting station (1), contact is made with the customer (14) automatically via the communication network, in particular via Internet, with advertising messages preferably being transmitted.
25. Use in accordance with claim 24, characterised in that the selection of the respective advertising message takes place in dependence on the stored data, so that individual advertising offers adapted for example to the purchasing behaviour of the customer (14) can be transmitted.
26. Apparatus for manufacturing product labels and/or product tags usable in the context of the method of one of the claims 1 to 25, characterised in that a unit (g) is provided for the marking of the product packages (21), product labels and/or product tags with a code (22) in accordance with one of the preceding claims.
27. Apparatus in accordance with claim 26, characterised in that the unit (g) for the marking is laid out in such a way that the code (22) can be applied to a position (20a) of the finished product package (21) which is not visible from the outside, in particular to the rear side of an already printed or yet to be printed package section.
28. Computerised till, characterised in that a unit (12) for generating or for receiving a code (25) in accor-

dance with one of the preceding claims and a printing mechanism (13) for printing this code onto a record (23) are provided.

29. Computerised till in accordance with claim 28, characterised in that a random number generator is provided for generating at least one element of a code (25) in accordance with one of the preceding claims.

30. Computerised till in accordance with claim 29, characterised in that an apparatus is provided for avoiding the generation of two identical codes (25) within a specific time interval.

31. Computerised till in accordance with one of the claims 28 to 30, characterised in that a connection (12) is provided for a communication network, in particular an Internet connection, via which the generated or printed codes (25) and/or the additional information produced by the computerised till (11) can be transmitted in accordance with claim 3 to the data collecting station (1).

32. Computerised till in accordance with claim 31, characterised in that codes (25) which are generated in the data collecting station (1) and are to be printed by the computerised till (11) can be received via the connection (12) for the communication network

33. Computerised till in accordance with one of the claims 28 to 32, characterised in that the data transmission via the communication network takes place packet-wise, in particular at predetermined times or in predetermined time intervals.

34. Printed cash receipt, printed invoice or printed entry card for use in a method in accordance with one of the claims 1 to 27, characterised in that a code (25) in accordance with one of the preceding claims is printed thereon in addition to particulars of price (24) and optionally further information, such as date, point of sale, product specifications and the like.
35. Product package, product label and/or product tag for use in a method in accordance with one of the claims 1 to 27, characterised in that a code (22) is printed thereon, punched thereinto, adhered thereon or supplied therewith in accordance with one of the preceding claims.
36. Product package, product label and/or product tag in accordance with claim 35, characterised in that the code (22) is arranged at a non-visible and/or non-accessible position (20a) of a filled and closed product package (21).
37. Method of building up a data bank (3) containing customer data and/or of organising a rebate or coupon system in which products (21) to be sold to customers (14) or records (23) handed out to customers (14) on the purchase of products (21) or services are each provided with a code (22, 25) and the customer (14) is motivated to subsequently transmit the code (22, 25) together with data characterising the respective customer (14) to a data collecting station (1) via a communication network, in particular via a telephone network or via Internet.

38. Method in accordance with claim 37, characterised by one or more features of the claims 1 to 27.